1:Haskins K-4,5 (1952-1954)1956 SO11 Bahia Brazilians SO11



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493 products which are carried from the various inland municípios of the region to Salvador and Feira de Santana are transported on trucks. These trucks pick up their loads at the weekly markets or at warehouses in the various cidades. Frequently they carry passengers as well as cargo, and the cheapest passenger service in the Recôncavo is to be found high on top of a heavily laden truck. It is especially common to seem trucks loaded with bags of farinha de mandioca speeding over the rough roads with the cab packed and the less fortunate passengers enduring the dust or the rain outside. Most agricultural laborers seem to travel in this fashion on longer journeys within the region. Many trucks operate on an unscheduled basis from cidade to cidade, accumulating loads without pre-arrangement. However, there is some regularized service, for it is a general practice for trucks from all over the Recôncavo to travel to Feira de Santana on its market day, and the more important markets of other cidades are also served by trucks on a regular but informal basis. Each of these trucks has its destination marked on the window and collects a load of goods and people as it passes across the region. The cost of this means of transport to the individual depends upon the distance he travels and the amount of goods which he carries. Thus both truck and bus transportation play a major role in the marketing system of the Recôncavo, each carrying both goods and passengers.

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438 One of the basic handicaps of automotive transport in the Recôncavo is that each município taxes the passage of goods transported on its roads. The repeated taxation of goods as they are moved across the boundaries of municípios may make it unprofitable for the agriculturalist to sell many of his products in the other markets of the region. Moreover, the lengthy stops required at each município boundary effectively slow down the movement of trucks and, to a lesser extent, of goods-carrying busses.

21 Hutchinson E-4, 5 (1950-1951) 1967 SO11 Bahia Brazilians SO11
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slaves and equipment. Thus began a long series of mortgages which continued for several centuries. The commercial agents in the city, for the most part representatives of Portuguese companies, loaned money to the plantation owners, using the next crop as collateral. They also charged high interest rates. When the next crop did not materialize, nor the next, the plantation owners found themselves inextricably in debt. At the same time the sugar market in Portugal was lost because the sugar was arriving there in a spoiled condition due to poor transportation, a cargo at times taking two years to arrive at its destination. Furthermore, the prices of most necessities were rising, and, in addition, Portugal began to tax the colonists heavily.

175 249* 426 458

In the early 1700's there was a more prosperous phase, due to higher prices for sugar in Europe. Many plantations were reconstructed, enlarged, and modified, and new ones were built. As a result many people went into debt again. During the eighteenth century two major factors turned against the prosperity of the sugar-cane growers: competition in the European market with the French, Spanish, and British, who were now producing sugar on their Caribbean islands; and the discovery of gold in the western part of Brazil. Sugar could be shipped to Europe more rapidly from the Caribbean than from Brazil. It was subject to less spoilage, and there was also probably less governmental interference. As soon as the European market was flooded with sugar, the price fell.

175 249* 458 [426]

The discovery of gold in Minas Gerais further dislocated the sugar industry of the Recôncavo at the time when it could least afford it. The prices of slaves, metals, cloth, cattle, horses, and all the necessities of life increased. Many of the freemen who worked in the plantations in administrative capacities were enticed away to the mines by the promise of great wealth. The need for slaves at the mines was great, and traders who sold slaves preferred to sell them to the miners, who could pay cash, rather than to the plantation owners, who frequently paid in sugar. During this time there was also a serious shortage of foodstuffs, for many of the smaller farmers who normally raised food crops emigrated to Minas Gerais.

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The agriculturalists--those who planted tobacco as well as those who planted sugar--were still being pressed by high taxes. There are many letters and documents from the governing bodies of the colony, addressed to the Portuguese king, telling him of the deplorable situation in which sugar planters

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2: Hutchinson E-4,5 (1950-1951) 1957 8011 Bahia Brazilians 8011



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*249 found themselves, with no food, their slaves dying, the price
458 of sugar falling, the markets lost, and, especially, overbur-
648 dening taxes. Most of the documents which remain are pessi-
• 651 mistic ones, for during the times of prosperity little was writ-
ten. At any rate, late in the eighteenth century some measures
were taken to lighten the burden of taxation and to provide bet-
ter means of transportation to Europe than the irregular sys-
tem of fleets which were frequently spaced two and three
years apart. As a result, many plantation owners took heart
and applied themselves again to the raising of sugar cane.
They were further aided by an increasing market in Europe,
which finally became almost entirely theirs at the turn of the
century, as a result of the European wars.

175 By the end of the Napoleonic wars sugar production was at
*249 its best, and Bahia was once again experiencing a pleasurable
458 prosperity. However, 1822 brought the War of Independence,
669 much of it fought in the Recôncavo. The war was supported to
[731] a great extent by the plantation masters, both financially and
physically. Although they gained a great deal of prestige, they
lost two harvests, and their exports fell off greatly. It took
them some time to recuperate, and in 1855 they suffered
another violent blow, an epidemic of cholera.

175 An indication of the difficulties caused by the epidemic is
*249 given in the following passage, translated from a document in
458 the inventory of the Baron of Caju made upon the death of his
731 wife, a victim of cholera:

> The family was in a good state of animation and pros-
> perity in 1855, when the fatal epidemic of cholera mor-
> bus wasted this Province, invading the home of the In-
> ventoried and causing him horrible damages and enormous
> losses! The Baroness fell victim to this voracious scourge!
> Eighty-two of the most valuable and useful slaves had the
> same fate; the best expediencies, treatment, and vigilant
> care were of no effect! Almost the entire harvest of this
> fatal year was lost in the complete absence of field hands,
> for the number not stricken was small, and the others,
> convalescents, were truly specters! The harvests of 1856
> and 1857 also suffered.

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175 Soon afterwards a new phase began when the Civil War
*249 started in the United States, sending up the price of sugar
[458] and increasing the market. Some years after this a disease
[731]

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begun to live together. But it is a general policy of Petrobrás that its employees establish regularized households and register their children, as the benefits of social legislation and insurance must be paid to legal beneficiaries, such as wives and children. Because of the many recent marriages, there are no longer any houses available in Vila Recôncavo, nor in Milagres, and there has been a spurt of housebuilding.

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There have also been some shifts in emphasis in the structure of the community. While the factory nucleus is no longer the scene of social gathering for the upper class of the area, the structure of the factory-private plantation system ensures that it continues to be the economic center as long as sugar cane is being planted in the area. The system of quotas established for the private planter and the factory by the Institute of Sugar and Alcohol requires that planter and factory cooperate in supplying and receiving sugar cane. Also, the physical structure of the area, in which the factory is the center of the network of a small railroad which reaches out to each of the private properties, strengthens the impression of the factory as the center of activities.

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The possible future shift from sugar to cacao will of course diminish the importance of the sugar factory. However, in the meantime there is a new factor which will give more importance than ever to the factory: a feira, or market place. The county of Vila Recôncavo does not have a weekly market. For many years the county officials have wanted to establish one, not only for increased municipal income, but also to help attract more people to the area and to make life easier for the population. A market place is now under construction at the factory nucleus. When the market is completed, the factory town will become at least a weekly center of attraction for many people of the surrounding plantations.

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The development of the petroleum industry is bringing new life to the town of Vila Recôncavo, to the nearby town of Milagres, and to the new city of Conselho. Petrobrás cannot develop a nucleus on the land which belongs to the factory or to the private owners, and therefore it must concentrate any local community building efforts in the old public towns which already exist. Petrobrás, indirectly, through the county court of Vila Recôncavo, will soon contribute considerably to the county income. The same sort of compensation which was worked out in regard to the planters is now being arranged for the county, through taxes on the finished products from

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2: Hutchinson E-4, 5 (1950-1951) 1957 SO11 Bahia Brazilians SO11

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the refinery, namely gasoline, kerosene, diesel oil, bottled gas, and other petroleum derivatives. As a result of the increased income, the county government will be able to build up the county seat considerably. A hospital is already being built, as well as a new dock for the boat which comes from the city.

In Milagres, located in the neighboring county, there is already a considerable movement for breaking away from the parent county and becoming a separate municipio, a common pattern in Brazil for districts which reach a certain population and degree of economic activity. Thus there are two possibilities for urban growth in the area and for the formation of urban centers which will attract the large rural population. The town of Vila Recôncavo is close to realizing other possibilities. The construction of a road from the town to Centro has already begun, filling a long-felt need. Its completion will make it possible for cars, buses, and trucks to come from Feira, on the edge of the sertão, to Centro, down through Vila Recôncavo to Milagres, and on into the city, shortening the long trip by the existing road which follows the edges of the Recôncavo. Such traffic would "put Vila Recôncavo on the map," and would greatly increase its contacts with the outside world. In addition, the possibilities of the introduction of a new crop to the community will bring increased commercial activity and a much greater tax income, enabling the county to build its own roads and bridges and to make other improvements for the development of the area.

Thus the community structure of Vila Recôncavo, which five years ago was in the process of crystallizing around the factory town, is now ripe for further change. The factory town continues for the present to be the major center, but the old county seat has all the possibilities of a rebirth of its former importance. In fact, because of the petroleum industry and the forthcoming changeover from sugar cane to cacao, the factory town is threatened as a community center, the position which it has only recently been consolidating.

Finally, one of the most important changes in Vila Recôncavo in these five years is a change in attitude on the part of the people. Vila Recôncavo was always known as a conservative community, maintaining its old traditions and ways, rejecting innovations. However, there is now an air of expectancy and a search for new ways and new things. Dissatisfaction with the sugar industry, combined with the appearance